

HERITAGE & DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT

*Combined Statement pursuant to Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990
and NPPF Section 16*

Property: Agecroft House, 34 Copperas Street, Manchester, M4 1HQ

Application Number: 145518/FO/2026

Proposal: Elevational alterations consisting of recladding of levels 4 & 5 (replacement of silver ACM cladding panels)

Conservation Area: Smithfield Conservation Area

Prepared by: Agecroft Investment Co Limited

Date: May 2026

1. Introduction

This Heritage and Design Access Statement has been prepared in response to Manchester City Council's request of 13 April 2026 (Ref: 145518/FO/2026) for a more comprehensive Heritage Statement in support of the above planning application. It is submitted in the spirit of constructive engagement and in accordance with the agreed scope confirmed by Planning Officer Jack Naven, with regards to a combined Heritage and Design Access Statement format.

The statement has been prepared by Agecroft Investment Co Limited and addresses the three matters identified by the LPA, namely:

- (i) the relative importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity;
- (ii) the merits of particular physical features of the building; and
- (iii) the merits of the building's setting and its contribution to the street scene.

It also assesses the impact of the proposed works on both the character and appearance of the Smithfield Conservation Area and on any adjacent locally listed buildings.

2. Background and Context of the Proposed Works

Agecroft House was constructed circa 2006 as a purpose-built, mixed-use development. A Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW) was commissioned from Octa Fire Ltd and issued in February 2025 (Ref: OF00178), following intrusive site inspections carried out in November 2024. The FRAEW was prepared in accordance with PAS9980:2022 and concluded that the silver aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding installed to the fourth

and fifth floor levels of the building (External Wall Type 4, 'EWT4') presents a HIGH fire risk to building occupants and that remedial action is required.

Specifically, the FRAEW recommends that the ACM panels be removed and replaced with a material achieving a minimum Euroclass A2 reaction to fire classification. This recommendation is made in the context of the post-Grenfell regulatory framework and is consistent with the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022, the Fire Safety Act 2021, and current guidance under Approved Document B.

The proposed works are therefore not cosmetic in nature, nor driven by aesthetic preference. They are a direct and necessary response to a formal fire safety assessment carried out by qualified fire engineers. The applicant is committed to completing the remediation in a manner that is sensitive to the conservation area context, and is accordingly proposing to source a replacement metal cladding panel that is as close as possible in colour, profile and appearance to the existing ACM, with a sample to be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to commencement.

3. Legislative and Policy Framework

3.1 Statutory Duty

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the local planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Smithfield Conservation Area. The applicant fully acknowledges this duty and has designed the proposed works with it in mind.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. It specifies that the level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact on its significance. This statement is submitted on that basis.

The NPPF distinguishes between substantial and less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets (paragraphs 208 and 209). For the reasons set out in this statement, the proposed works are considered to result in no harm — and indeed a modest enhancement — to the significance of the conservation area, given that they replace a non-traditional, fire-compromised material with a sympathetic equivalent.

3.3 Manchester Core Strategy

Policy CC9 requires development in Manchester City Centre to preserve or enhance identified heritage assets, including conservation areas. Policy EN3 requires new development to support preservation of the historic environment. The proposed works are consistent with both policies, retaining the existing external appearance of the building while substituting a safer and compliant cladding system.

3.4 Conservation Area Appraisal Guidance

The Smithfield Conservation Area appraisal identifies red brick walling as the predominant material in the area, and advises that solid traditional materials should be used in preference to large expanses of cladding, concrete and glass. The existing ACM cladding is acknowledged to be neither a traditional nor a heritage material. Its replacement does not conflict with this guidance; on the contrary, retaining the material indefinitely would represent a greater departure from the appraisal's intentions than its replacement with a visually equivalent modern panel.

4. Heritage Significance Assessment

4.1 The Relative Importance of the Building

Agecroft House is not a listed building. It does not appear on the National Heritage List for England, nor on any local list of buildings of merit maintained by Manchester City Council. It was completed circa 2006 and is therefore a wholly modern structure with no historic age, no association with any person or event of historic significance, and no architectural pedigree that would bring it within any recognised category of heritage significance.

Applying the significance hierarchy set out in the Smithfield Conservation Area appraisal and the NPPF framework, Agecroft House falls within the 'Negligible/None' category: it is a modern building making no definable positive contribution to the conservation area as a heritage asset in its own right. This assessment is not a criticism of the building's design — it is a factual observation arising from its age and construction date.

The building has no intrinsic architectural rarity. It was designed and built using standard contemporary construction methods and materials, following the guidance of Approved Document B 2000 (incorporating 2002 amendments) applicable at the time. None of its materials — red facing brick, terracotta tiles, aluminium composite panels, curtain walling — are of any heritage value or interest.

4.2 The Merits of Particular Physical Features

The building's principal facade material is red facing brick, which runs from ground floor to fourth floor level on all elevations. This is by far the dominant material and represents the aspect of the building most relevant to its relationship with the conservation area context. The brick facade responds appropriately to the predominant materiality of the wider Smithfield area.

The silver ACM cladding panels (EWT4 in the FRAEW) are confined to the fourth and fifth floor levels on all elevations — the uppermost two storeys — and are set back from the main brick facade of the building. They constitute a relatively small proportion of the overall facade area and are not visible at street level in the same way as the brick and terracotta below. They have no heritage value, no architectural rarity, and no significance of any kind. They were an off-the-shelf modern cladding product at the time of construction, and their combustible core is now formally classified as a fire safety hazard.

Other facade materials — grey/blue terracotta tiles (EWT2), grey metal cladding panels (EWT3), and curtain walling to the staircase (EWT6) — are similarly modern and carry no heritage significance. None of these materials are affected by the current application.

4.3 The Building's Setting and Contribution to the Street Scene

Copperas Street and Edge Street are relatively quiet side streets within the Northern Quarter, characterised by a mixture of building ages, scales and uses typical of the Smithfield Conservation Area. The conservation area appraisal notes that variety rather than architectural uniformity is the area's predominant characteristic.

Agecroft House contributes to the street scene through its massing and its use of red brick as the primary facade material on the lower floors, which broadly respects the prevailing materiality and scale of nearby buildings. The ACM cladding on the upper two floors, being set back from the principal facade plane and visible primarily in upward oblique views, plays a secondary role in the street scene. Its replacement with a visually equivalent metal cladding panel will not alter the building's contribution to the street scene in any material respect.

The FRAEW site photographs confirm that the building is immediately adjacent to older Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings, including what appears from the photographs

to be a locally listed or historically significant red brick building with ornate stone detailing to the east. The proposed recladding works are confined to the upper floors of Agecroft House and will not affect the relationship between the building and these adjacent structures in any meaningful way.

5. Impact on the Conservation Area

The proposed works involve the replacement of the existing silver ACM cladding panels on the fourth and fifth floor levels with a metal cladding system that is as close as possible in appearance, colour and profile to the existing. The external appearance of the building will, to all intents and purposes, remain unchanged.

The only substantive change to the character of the building will be in fire performance terms — the replacement material will achieve a minimum Euroclass A2 reaction to fire classification, making the building safer for its occupants and reducing fire risk to the wider street. This is a benefit, not a harm.

Applying the NPPF framework, the proposed works result in no harm to the significance of the Smithfield Conservation Area. There is no loss of historic fabric, no change to the building's external appearance perceptible at street level, and no alteration to the established character, scale or materiality of the conservation area. Indeed, the removal of a fire-compromised material and its replacement with a compliant equivalent may be regarded as a modest enhancement to the long-term stewardship of the built environment within the conservation area.

6. Impact on Adjacent Locally Listed Buildings

The applicant is aware that the council requires an assessment of the impact of the proposals on adjacent locally listed buildings. The FRAEW photographs show that Agecroft House is situated in close proximity to a number of older buildings of apparent merit.

The proposed recladding works are restricted to the upper two storeys of Agecroft House and involve a like-for-like replacement of the existing cladding panel. They do not alter the footprint, massing, height, roofline or principal facade materials of the building. No physical works will be carried out to any adjacent property. There is no mechanism by which the proposed works could cause harm — direct or indirect — to any locally listed or otherwise significant building in the vicinity.

The closest buildings of apparent heritage interest visible in the site photographs appear to be Victorian red brick commercial buildings. The dominant material of Agecroft House at lower levels — red facing brick — already establishes a visual continuity with these neighbours. The upper-level ACM cladding to be replaced sits above the principal sightlines from street level and is already set back from the main facade plane. Its replacement on a like-for-like basis will not introduce any new element that could harm the setting or significance of adjacent heritage assets.

7. Design Approach

The applicant's design approach is guided by the following principles, each of which has been agreed with Planning Officer Jack Naven in the pre-submission discussions documented in correspondence of 7 April 2026:

Material selection: The contractor will source a metal cladding system as close as possible in appearance, colour and profile to the existing silver ACM panels. A physical sample of the proposed replacement material will be submitted to Manchester City Council for approval prior to commencement of any works on site.

Acoustic performance: A note from a qualified acoustician will be provided confirming that the replacement material achieves equivalent or better levels of acoustic insulation and noise breakout performance as the existing system, or alternatively a full noise assessment will be submitted if required.

Scope of works: The works are limited to the replacement of the ACM cladding panels on levels 4 and 5 only. No alterations are proposed to any other element of the building's external envelope.

These conditions are agreed to be subject to formal planning conditions on any approval notice, as confirmed in the applicant's architect's correspondence of 7 April 2026.

8. Conclusion

Agecroft House is a modern building completed circa 2006. It is not listed and carries no intrinsic heritage significance. The ACM cladding to be replaced is a secondary, upper-level element of the facade with no architectural merit and no heritage value. Its removal and like-for-like replacement is necessitated entirely by a formal fire safety assessment carried out by qualified fire engineers under PAS9980:2022, and represents a statutory obligation on the part of the building owner.

The proposed works will not alter the external appearance of the building in any perceptible way. They will not harm the character or appearance of the Smithfield Conservation Area. They will not affect the significance or setting of any adjacent locally listed building. They will result in a building that is safer for its residents, safer for its neighbours, and better managed in the long term.

The applicant respectfully invites Manchester City Council to confirm that this combined Heritage and Design Access Statement satisfies the outstanding requirement and to proceed to determination of application 145518/FO/2026 accordingly.

Agecroft Investment Co Limited
14-32 Hewitt Street
Manchester
M15 4GB

Duncan Westbrook (Managing Director)
Email: duncan@agecroftinvestment.com
Tel: 07957 766 026